



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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President Shelly praises PNM-Navajo Nation Workforce Training Program at NTU



Top, President Shelly addresses NTU students that received scholarships. Bottom, First Lady Martha Shelly presented stoles to students graduating from Navajo Technical University on May 15. (Photos by Rick Abasta)

CROWNPOINT, N.M.—Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and First Lady Martha Shelly honored students at Navajo Technical University. The students were recipients of scholarships from the PNM-Navajo Nation Workforce Training Program for careers in the energy industry.

Officials from PNM and the Navajo Nation, students and their families gathered inside the NTU Wellness Center to celebrate academic achievement on April 30. It was the second year President Shelly and PNM representatives honored students at NTU for the new training program.

The program was created as a response to the shutdown of two units at San Juan Generating Station in 2017. PNM invested \$1 million for scholarships over a five-year period for students seeking a career in energy and

attending college at Navajo Technical University and San Juan College.

Students participating in the program are seeking careers in energy, construction, manufacturing and technology. The program began in 2014 to ensure the Four Corners has a trained workforce for existing and emerging jobs, especially Navajos.

“Congratulations to the students, especially for those graduating. For the rest of you, congratulations are also in order because you have completed another year of school,” President Shelly said.

The leaders of PNM and NTU also deserve acknowledgement, he said, not only for the scholarships provided, but also for preparing students for jobs in the energy sector. Education is an important component for Navajo sovereignty and self-

determination, he noted.

“We celebrated Navajo Nation Sovereignty Day earlier this week,” President Shelly said. “I shared a radio message that this tribal holiday is much more than just eight hours off from work.”

On April 16, 1985, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Navajo Tribe’s right to impose taxes in the court case *Kerr-McGee Corporation v. Navajo Tribe*. From that monumental decision, Navajo Nation Sovereignty Day was enacted and the tribe began taxing companies doing business with the tribe.

“Today, the Navajo Nation owns a coalmine and we have a seat at the table with energy companies operating on the Nation. What a long way we have traveled since 1985,” President Shelly said.

Such actions have propelled the Navajo Nation to be a leader for Indian Country, he said. The unique partnership with PNM to prepare Navajo people for the future changes in the energy industry is another advancement for the self-determination of the Nation, he added.

“The PNM-Navajo Nation Workforce Training Program is an investment in the continued success of the Navajo people,” President Shelly said. “It is our hope that you return home to help your people, your nation.”

One student graduating with a bachelor’s degree in information technology plans on pursuing a post-graduate degree before returning home to help the Navajo Nation.

Sherietta Martinez-Brown said, “Thank you PNM for

making all this possible. I also want to thank NTU and President Shelly.”

Brown began attending classes at NTU in 2010, focusing on the law advocate program. Personal challenges in her life created roadblocks, but she finished the program. In 2012, she returned to NTU to pursue a bachelor’s degree.

“It was hard for me. To this day, it’s still hard. I make myself go to class every day. I make myself read more if I don’t understand,” Brown said. “I’m so thankful for my friends because they see me struggle and they’ll help me.

“Stay focused on your dreams. Never give up,” she added.

Such success stories are why PNM invested in the scholarship program, said Ron Darnell, senior vice president of public policy at PNM.

“We’re here to celebrate the success of students. We want to empower communities to be productive,” Darnell said.

Last year, 47 students at NTU took advantage of the scholarship program, he said, with 12 students graduating.

“This year, there are 38 students at NTU receiving scholarships and 11 students will become 2015 graduates. Again, congratulations,” Darnell said.

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